

NEWSLETTER



ARBORETA & BOTANIC GARDENS

prepared by the public services division

June 9 1972

RESEARCH DIVISION

On May 26, 1972, a surprise visitor came to the research laboratory center. She was Ms. Anas platyrhynchos. She flew down and landed at the center of our water lily pool. She was very happy and excited, as observed by some of us, diving and bathing with many movements. But it was a very short visit, for she flew away gracefully. We hope she will visit us again.

During the past 15 years, research workers at the Arboretum have established numerous field plantings of Cistus (rockrose) in the foothills of the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains. The purpose of these plots was to study the ability of Cistus species introduced from the Mediterranean area to grow in the wildlands of Southern California and ultimately to test the "fire retardance" of the plants under actual field conditions. Several of the plots have been selected for further investigation to answer the question of whether or not Cistus is becoming permanently established (naturalized) in our chaparral-covered foothills. Field work currently underway includes counting and mapping the distribution of Cistus seedlings when they occur on both unburned and burned sites. Involved in this phase of the project are Ken Montgomery, Marcella Juhren and Bob Gonderman of the Research Division and Tom Strid from Cal Poly, Pomona, who is doing his Senior Project research on this problem. The data collected so far indicate that Cistus can and, in fact, is naturalizing on certain wildland sites under favorable conditions. These favorable conditions include moisture at the right seasons, vegetative competition, soil factors, and animal disturbance. However, in other areas where conditions are apparently not favorable, the plantings are gradually diminishing in size as the old bushes die and are not being replaced by seedlings.

DESCANSO DIVISION

In spite of the hot dry days, Descanso Gardens still has fair color in the rose garden, and among the bedding plants such as the delphiniums, geum, and the snapdragons.

There is quite a bit of talk about the greenness of the trees and shrubs at the gardens, and some of the personnel think it is due largely to the drought that we have had all winter and spring. Because it was dry for so long a period we began watering much earlier. Normally, we would not have, therefore the plants have been receiving water over a much longer period than before. Result, lush green leaves.

PEOPLE

Mark Anthony visited the gardens last Friday, so he is coming along. Pete Zabriski visited us last Tuesday. He is still on a walking chair support but is close to coming back. Bill Boor had a head-on collision with an automobile while riding his motorcycle on the 15th of May. He suffered a broken elbow, a few broken ribs, many cuts and bruises. He has been released from the Queen of Angels hospital and is now recuperating at home.

A new face added to the staff. Welcome to Dennis Marshall, our newest employee, who will fill the position of grounds maintenance man.

PROJECTS:

The bird house refurbishing project is finished and it is worth a trip to Descanso just to come and see it. This is no ordinary bird station. The setting and location make it rather unique. You can see land birds one moment and with a turn of the head you can see the water fowl.

So make it a point to visit our bird station and see or hear a murmuration of starlings, an exaltation of

swallows, a gaggle of geese, a bale of turtles, and a flight of doves (Ed's note: Or a sord of mallards, a badelyng of ducks, a covert of coots, and so on far into the night.)

PUBLIC SERVICES DIVISION

We wish to welcome three new tour guides in the as-needed category. They are Dennis Sheridan, a zoology major at Cal Poly, Pomona; Dan Dancer, a psychology major at UCLA; and David Foster, a wildlife biology major at PCC who also works as a guide at Eaton Canyon and Whittier Narrows Nature Centers. These men will work both weekdays and weekends at our facilities, serving as school field trip leaders as well as in the usual tour guide capacities.

Attendance is up at each of our facilities. Figures from January 1 through April 30 show South Coast up 27.4%; the Arboretum up 18.3%; and Descanso up 5.9%. The great increase at South Coast may be explained by the garden's now being open on a full weekly schedule, the advent of tram tours, and the increase in tour guide services. The increase at the Arboretum is primarily due to the increased number of attractions - aquatic garden, expanded Demonstration Home Gardens, lecture series, pond ecology and other walks, the Baldwin Bonanza - plus extended open hours at the Santa Anita Depot, and a greater use of the facility by garden groups. The more modest increase at Descanso represents a normal growth rate. As they say in the political arena, we are not in a numbers race, but the figures are evidence that the Department is responding to public interest and need.

ARBORETUM DIVISION

That large plot you may have noticed adjacent to the tram parking area is being devoted to vegetables. Our objective is to test different varieties of some of the more popular vegetables to see which ones might do best in this area.

We now have an automatic sprinkler system in the Aquatic Garden. There are a few bugs to be worked out, but for the most part it is reducing the burden of watering for the gardeners in the area. It also gives us the advantage of being able to water this highly popular area at night so that visitors can make full use of this garden feature.

One of the prime objectives of the Arboretum is the trial and introduction of new plants to Southern

California horticulture. Beginning with Felicia amelliodes 'Santa Anita' in 1957, we have so far introduced 57 plants. We presently have contracts with nurseries that will bring this number up to 67, and 32 other plants are being investigated and considered for possible introduction. The value of the program is exemplified by our 1958 introduction, Osteospermum fruticosum. This plant has become one of the most useful ground covers in Southern California for both home and public plantings. In fact, we are told that it can rarely be purchased in a nursery now because the total output of the industry is being taken by the State Division of Highways and other organizations that make mass plantings. We appreciate the key role that the gardening staff plays in this program.

SOUTH COAST DIVISION

Twenty-four extra-large water lilies, representing twelve different varieties, were donated to us by Miller Water Gardens in San Gabriel. Thank you, Hal Miller, for a beautiful contribution to our lake and stream area.

A special exhibit of cacti and succulents now on display in the sarran display area is the work of Darryl Combs (GMM) and friends.

A recent Peninsula supplement to the South Bay Daily Breeze featured South Coast with color photographs of the stream area.

Some of our interesting trees and shrubs now in bloom include: Melaleuca nesophila (pink), Viola hybrids (pansy petals), Tabebuia avellandae, and the Matilija poppies.

Western and California gulls, Vaux swifts, and a pair of wild mallards were the most unusual birds of the many observed on the May bird walk. South Coast is also temporary home for these four migratory warblers: orange-crowned, Nashville, hermit, and MacGillivray's warblers.